

Company, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, based at Fort Benning, GA.

Rick's father Richard remembers his son as "a great kid." He also recalls the commitment Rick displayed in always trying to do his best. Rick graduated in 2000. "He was really proud of that," his father recalls.

During Rick's funeral, BG Tod Carmony, the deputy commander for the 38th Infantry Division, remarked upon the courage Rick displayed by enlisting in the Army after the 9/11 attacks. Rick knew it was wartime, and he knew the risks that he would be running. But, he enlisted anyway. This is what Brigadier General Carmony said about Rick:

He understood that we have no choice but to win this global war on terrorism if his family, his community, and his country are to be safe. So Richard put himself on the line, and he died trying to keep that promise of safety to his family and country.

Brigadier General Carmony also noted that Rick was an expert with a carbine and a qualified Bradley gunner. According to the Brigadier General, this "is quite an accomplishment."

Rick's father remembers that his son was proud of his role in the military and took the dangers of it in stride. He said, "Rick didn't mind at all. It was a job—that's the way he looked at it."

Indeed, the Army was a job that Rick did exceedingly well. When he died, he was on his second tour of duty in Iraq. And according to his father, Rick had been sent back because the Iraq elections were approaching and they "wanted some guys with experience in the country."

Well, Rick was a guy with experience—and he used that experience to help further the goal of democracy in Iraq. In fact, the day Rick died was also the day that millions of Iraqis braved death to vote for their new constitution.

As Brigadier General Carmony put it, "By being there, Richard gave the Iraqi people a chance to move a step closer to freedom and democracy."

Rick was scheduled to return home in December 2005. According to his father, he was going to take some time off to relax and then planned on getting a job as a welder.

Those who knew best Rick remember that his favorite pastime was riding dirt bikes. His father owns about 6 acres of land, and Rick simply loved riding all over it. "He was all over the place," his dad recalls.

Rick also loved barbecue—steaks and ribs. His father said that Rick had to have a barbecue every time he came home. According to his dad, Rick "said it beat the MREs—[that] there was nothing like a home-cooked meal."

These barbecues were one of the many things Rick loved. He enjoyed life, and he especially enjoyed the simple things—like coming home to eat a good meal with his family.

Specialist Hardy was a courageous soldier—a true hero, who always stood

on the front lines. His Internet tribute Web page continues to be filled daily by family and friends with messages that serve as a living testament to Rick's legacy. Rick had many people who loved him.

His Aunt "Debbers" posted the following message on the tribute Web site. This is what she wrote:

Ricky! You were supposed to come home alive and well! I guess God had other plans. You are so loved and missed. I know you didn't want to be forgotten, but this wasn't the way we wanted to remember you. May you at last find peace. You will always be remembered, especially at the family barbecues.

God bless you for what you have ultimately paid the price for—our freedom. Give Gram a hug and kiss. All our love to you.

Rick's Aunt Sandra posted this message:

To my nephew—you will be missed greatly, and we love you. We are also very proud of you and all of your comrades who are fighting this war. God bless all of you.

Rick's body was laid to rest with full military honors at St. Stephen's Catholic Cemetery in Bolivar. For his brave actions, Rick was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. During his career with the Army, he was also the recipient of the Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Combat Infantryman's Badge, and the Weapons Qualification Badge.

The world is a better place since Rick Hardy has been in it. A young man with courage and a sense of adventure, Rick was the model of what we all hope our children will become.

My wife Fran and I will continue to keep Rick's father and step-mother, Richard and Jody, his mother Doris; and his sisters Kristy and Jessica in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATOR MIKE DEWINE

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Senator from Ohio for allowing me to intercede for a few moments. Since he is on the Senate floor and he has been so gracious as to give me this time—I did not come to the floor and will not talk long about Senator DEWINE, but since he is on the Senate floor and gave me the time, I wanted to express to him my grateful appreciation for his service to the Senate, not just the people of Ohio but the people of this great country.

One of the great joys I have had as a Member of the Senate, having been

elected 2 years ago, was to serve on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee with Senator DEWINE. One of my great joys I had early on as a Member of this body was to watch him join the Gang of 14 and break the logjams, allowing us to confirm Supreme Court Justices Alito and Roberts. I worked closely with him on the pensions bill. Time and again, I saw his tireless effort on behalf of the best interests of this country and in particular always the best interests of the people of Ohio.

To Senator DEWINE, not to pander because of his graciousness in giving me the time but for giving me the unique chance to express that, we are all very grateful.

DELTA AIRLINES

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise for a moment in morning business to address an issue that to some may appear only to affect the State of Georgia and maybe even in particular the city of Atlanta. But in practice, I say to the distinguished Senator from Utah who is in the chair and others, this is an issue of major import to the United States of America.

An offer has been tendered for the purchase of Delta Airlines. Delta Airlines is a great American carrier that, like most airlines, has gone through terribly difficult times post-9/11. Delta went into bankruptcy. Delta has worked hard in bankruptcy to develop a plan to exit bankruptcy as a healthy, thriving, and dominate company. To Delta's eternal credit, their management committed from the beginning that they would honor and preserve the pension plans of their employees were we able in the U.S. Congress to modernize the pension laws in this country to allow them to do so.

Thanks in no small measures to yourself, Mr. President, and to Senator HATCH as well and the 97 Members of this body, the pension modernization bill passed. We put in specific provisions for the aviation industry, and great airlines and their employees now will be able to earn their pensions and not have them dispensed with because we addressed that crisis, and more importantly Delta Airlines' management has worked to reduce its costs, and its employees have voluntarily taken pay cuts. They have modernized their fleet. They have repositioned their fleet. They have opened international marketplaces that never before were available to people in this country. They have paid the heavy price that only in the great American free-enterprise system are you able to do where you take the problems and adversity and turn them into opportunities.

Now on the doorstep of exiting bankruptcy and filing that petition, a hostile takeover has been made to purchase that great airline.

Before I came to the Senate, I was in business. Nobody understands buying and selling companies and opportunities better than I, and no one would

ever diminish those who seek to take advantage of those opportunities which are there. But I rise for just a minute to make some points that I hope all of us in this Senate and the appropriate committees in this body and the appropriate agencies of the United States are very careful to examine before any acquisition or merger of U.S. Airlines and Delta Airlines were to take place.

First, in our fragile aviation system it is critical to understand that competition is still in the best interests of the American consumer. If you overlay the routes of those two airlines, you will see massive duplications, which ends up in many cases that where there are two competitors in an airport, it is reduced to only one. In the absence of competition, prices rise and service is diminished.

Second, in the great hub-and-spoke airlines and the legacy carriers of this country, people in secondary markets have had access to the major airports such as O'Hare and Hartsfield and LAX in Los Angeles. But as you merge two together, the first place they find savings is in reductions of those flights and those capacities from those secondary markets—the Augusta, Georgias; the Columbuses; the Meridian, Mississippi; the Asheville, North Carolinas; and many other cities such as those around the country. It is very important for us to be sure, when we analyze the viability of such a proposal, that we not diminish the opportunity for Americans in those cities to be able to access aviation as they have in the past.

Equally important is the future of aviation in this country. A further consolidation of the airlines we have now would lead us to singular service in many cities, an absence of competition, an inevitable increase in rates, and, unfortunately, less than the healthiest aviation industry in the country.

As this proposal has now come forward, it is important for us in this body to analyze from a competitive standpoint, from a competition standpoint, from a consumer interest standpoint, from a marketplace standpoint, from a secondary market standpoint, and from the heavy prices that have been paid by the American aviation industry to reposition itself post-9/11 to make sure we honor those that have paid the price, are prepared to exit bankruptcy as a viable competitive airline, and not allow a quick, hostile takeover at the last minute and threaten competition, secondary market service, lower flight costs, and the great reward of America for paying the price to do the right thing, to exit bankruptcy and come back stronger than ever before.

I respect this great system. I respect greatly Delta Airlines and the price its employees have paid. I respect greatly the management that committed itself even in bankruptcy to ensuring its employees come first, their pensions would be honored, and they did whatever to see to it that was a reality.

As one Member of this Senate, I will call on my colleagues to look diligently at all of these questions as we move forward and make sure we honor competition, that we honor the secondary market, that we honor the employees of this great airline and do everything we can to preserve the modern competitive aviation system we have today and do not succumb ourselves to the threat of massive consolidation and an absence of competition.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL RYAN E. MILLER

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to LCpl Ryan E. Miller of Gahanna, OH. Ryan was killed on September 3, 2006, by an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations in the Al Anbar province of Iraq. When he died, he was 2 months into his second tour of duty. He was 21 years old.

Long before he was old enough to enlist in the Marines, Ryan was a courageous protector. He was always looking out for his family and friends—especially his younger sister Tara.

Ryan's aunt Kathie Masters remembers how even when Ryan was just 4 years old, he was always protecting Tara. One day, she had toddled toward the end of the driveway. As she got close to the road, 4-year-old Ryan raced toward her to keep her from crossing into the street. As Kathie recalls:

Tears were streaming down his face and he was screaming, 'No, Tara! No!' He ran to shield her from harm's way.

That story sums up the type of person Ryan Miller was throughout his entire life—selfless, caring, and always concerned first and foremost about others.

Ryan graduated from DeSales High School in 2003, and enlisted in the Marines December of that same year. He told his parents that "he thought he would come out of it a stronger, better person with lifelong friendships." As Ryan told his father, Ed: "There's nothing negative here, Dad. This is all good."

When Ryan was a child his father taught him how to shoot a pellet gun in the backyard. Even at an early age, Ed could see that Ryan was a good marksman. Years later—after enlisting in the Marines—Ryan went to the School of Infantry at Camp Pendleton, CA, and graduated with the Military Occupational Specialty for rifleman.

Ryan's uncle Michael remembers that his nephew welcomed the challenge of the Marines. "He wanted to be tested," he recalls. "He wanted to serve as three past generations of the Miller family did so proudly. He wanted to be the best."

Ryan was so proud of serving his Nation in the military, and his father remembers that the Marines had made

Ryan more confident, mature, and focused. Ryan was first deployed to Iraq in February 2004. After returning that following September, he would give slide shows for anyone interested in what the experience had been like. And although Ryan's second tour was more volatile than his first, he always maintained his positive attitude—always told his parents not to worry. "I can handle anything they can throw at me," his father remembers Ryan saying. "I'll have a lot of good stories to tell you when I get back."

Ryan was, indeed, an excellent Marine. He served with pride, honor, and dedication. Joseph Rivera, a fellow marine who had served with Ryan, wrote the following message to Ryan's family on an Internet tribute Web site:

I'm very sorry for your loss. I knew Ryan shortly after he got to the 3-2. I stood a lot of post with him. He was a good Marine and an even better friend. He was one of the best guys I've ever had the privilege of serving with. He will be missed—but never forgotten.

Five days before his death, Ryan called his parents Ed and Mary. After 10 days of being in the field, he told them he was eager for a shower and a good meal. Assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, NC, Ryan anticipated heading out again soon.

For those who knew Ryan, it is easy to remember his sparkling blue eyes, his "trademark smile," and his love of athletics—especially baseball, Ohio State football, and the Minnesota Vikings. People also remember his "quiet work ethic" and how his military service deepened his maturity, focus, and confidence. They also will recall his strong Catholic faith and how he leaned on it during times of trouble.

At Ryan's funeral, his aunt Kathie remembered the dedication with which he served his country, and the way he inspired all he knew with his courage. This is what Kathie said:

The one thing I can say about Ryan for sure [is that] Ryan didn't sit out. For as long as he was able, he shielded us from harm's way. He willingly put others before himself. He died a hero—protecting us, our children, [and] our grandchildren.

The Reverend Anthony P. Lonzo, speaking of Ryan's commitment to service, said this about him:

[Ryan] was a man of God, a man of honor, a man of respect. These are the values that made him the man he is and [the man he] was when he joined the Marine Corps and made the ultimate sacrifice of his life.

At a service held at a chapel in Iraq, SGT Jeff Weaver, who served with Ryan, said the following:

Miller came with one of the greatest attitudes possessed by any man. . . . [He] had a quiet demeanor, combined with a powerful presence that was a source of inspiration for anyone around him. . . . [Ryan]—you will not be forgotten and your memory will be carried on by each and every one of us.

Ryan was a young man with a bright future before him. After returning from Iraq, he planned to go to college and